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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 002894

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CU](#) [AR](#) [MOLINA](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE KIRCHNER VISIT TO CUBA STILL UNDER REVIEW

REF: BUENOS AIRES 02682

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (C) Summary: At a luncheon on October 6, Under Secretary for Foreign Policy Garcia Moritan told the Ambassador that Cuba was lobbying hard for an official visit from either President Nestor Kirchner or the first lady but that no visit would be contemplated until Cuban scientist Hilda Molina was allowed to visit her family in Argentina. The Ambassador told Garcia Moritan a visit by Kirchner, regardless of the circumstances, was a bad idea and would simply play into the hands of the Cuban government. We made it clear that we would prefer that no visit to Cuba by GoA officials take place. However, if one did, the Ambassador stressed it was absolutely essential that Kirchner also meet with dissidents and opposition activists. In a separate meeting the same day with the DCM, the Foreign Minister's Chief of Cabinet, Ambassador Eduardo Valdes, also raised the possibility of a Kirchner visit to Cuba. The DCM underscored that a Kirchner visit would send the wrong message and undermine the strong commitment to human rights and democracy the president had demonstrated here in Argentina and in his dealings with other countries in the region. End Summary.

2. (C) At a luncheon on October 6, the number three MFA official, Under Secretary for Foreign Policy Roberto Garcia Moritan, told the Ambassador that Cuba was lobbying hard for an official visit by either Kirchner or the first lady (and senator) Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. Garcia Moritan noted that any consideration of a visit was dependent on resolving the long-standing issue of granting travel permits to Cuban scientist Hilda Molina and her mother to visit her son and his family in Argentina. The Ambassador told Garcia Moritan a visit by Kirchner, regardless of the circumstances, was a bad idea and would simply play into the hands of the Cuban government. However, if a visit did take place, he stressed to Garcia Moritan that it was absolutely essential that Kirchner also meet with dissidents and opposition activists.

3. (C) The same day the DCM, accompanied by the ECON and POL counselors, met with the Foreign Ministry Chief of Cabinet, Amb. Eduardo Valdes, to provide a briefing on a separate issue. (MFA Director for North American Affairs Amb. Vicente Espeche Gil was also present.) Following the briefing, Valdes quickly raised the issue of a possible Kirchner trip to Cuba. He noted he was aware of the meeting DCM had with Under Secretary for Latin American Affairs Dario Alessandro last month on the Cuban visit issue. (reftel) Valdes said the possibility of a Kirchner visit to Cuba had been misinterpreted and played up by the media. As did Garcia Moritan with the Ambassador, he added that a presidential visit would not take place before a resolution of the Molina issue.

4. (C) Repeating the points delivered to Alessandro, the DCM emphasized that a Kirchner visit to Cuba (regardless of whether Molina was issued a travel permit) would send the wrong message in light of the systematic repression and crackdown by Cuba on opposition activists. He pointed out that Kirchner had worked diligently to establish strong credentials as a supporter of human rights and constitutional democracy, noting his support for the constitutional government of President Mesa in Bolivia and for the recall referendum in Venezuela and that a Cuba visit would undermine these accomplishments. The DCM told Valdes that if Kirchner ultimately did decide to visit Cuba, meetings with opposition and dissident figures would be critical. Valdes responded with a replay of Kirchner's efforts in support of democratic institutions in Venezuela and Bolivia and then ended the meeting, stating that for the present "we're not going" (to Cuba).

5. (C) Comment: The Ambassador and Country Team members will continue to raise the issue of human rights in Cuba and to discourage GoA actions that can be manipulated by the Cuban government in Castro's favor. End Comment.  
GUTIERREZ